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BIONDI'S SATURNALIA GROUP

One of the most notable works of sculpture at the Pan-American Exposition is stowed away in a corner of the Midway, and has hardly received a passing notice. This is Biondi's remarkable group representing the Saturnalia, which received the grand prize and diploma of honor at the International Exposition of 1900 at Paris.



ERNESTO BIONDI
From a Photograph

It was placed on exhibition in "The Venice of America," on the Pan-American Midway, for the reason that works of art not produced by American artists and sculptors were barred from the regular fine arts exhibition, and it has been almost denied a notice for the reason that the exposition being a Pan-American affair, practically only American work has been exploited. This wonderful production, however, is worthy of a fuller presentation to the public, both on account of the historic picture it presents and on account of the rare skill with which the sculptor has worked out his conception.

Biondi was eleven years in making the Saturnalia. There are ten figures in the group, which is cast in bronze, and weighs 200,000 pounds. Its value is estimated at from \$100,000 to \$500,000. The freight charges on the work alone, from Italy to the United States, was \$3,897. As this masterpiece is the property of the Italian government, its removal to the United States for exhibition purposes could only be effected by special permission of his majesty, King Victor Emanuel, and on the condition that it be exhibited in an Italian portion of the grounds, and that the two officers sent with it by the government of Italy be maintained and sent back at the close of the exposition, without expense to the government.

The group gives a vivid picture of a most interesting period of the Roman empire. The time chosen by the sculptor is that shortly after the introduction of Christianity into Rome, when the empire was on its decline, and the Roman warriors were unable to oppose the invasion of barbarians, who wreaked their revenge on the citizens of Rome by petty depredations.

It is the Feast of the Saturnalia, and we are in the midst of a night of orgies. A number of plebeians have met some intoxicated priests on the Appian Way, the ancient sacred street of Rome. These three priests are the incarnation of the pagan world. The plebeian group includes a gladiator; and in his company is a woman, whom one of the priests recognizes as of patrician blood. These two are accompanied by their child. One of the priests makes a slurring remark to the woman, who is too intoxicated to realize its purport; but her gladiator husband flashes an angry glance, and his whole attitude shows that he is conscious of his superior strength, and hints at a challenge. The woman, half intoxicated though she is, leans upon him, confident of his ability to protect her. The face and attitude of the child express resentment at the insult to his mother.

On the right of the gladiator is a courtesan, very much intoxicated. Beyond her are a slave, a drunken soldier, and a player of the *tibici*, a flute-like instrument. The three priests present the three stages of intoxication. One has become a com-



THE SATURNALIA
By Ernesto Biondi



HEAD OF SOLDIER
Detail from the Saturnalia

plete imbecile from over-indulgence in wine, and is stretched out upon the ground, with no regard for his appearance. The next priest is still sufficiently himself to be ashamed of his companions, and is apparently trying to get them home. The third priest is in that stage of intoxication in which the subject is inclined to be insulting and quarrelsome.

The features of all the ten figures, and their attitudes and every detail, are worthy of study. On the whole the group is a picture of great interest, and a remarkable portrayal of a period

which will never cease to have an extraordinary fascination for the student of history and of human character.

EDWARD HALE BRUSH.



RECENT WORK OF ILLUSTRATORS— ALBERT FLEURY

The following four plates are representative of one class of illustrative work done by Albert Fleury, specimens of whose street and bridge scenes have heretofore appeared in BRUSH & PENCIL. The pictures are part of a portfolio of water-colors executed last summer during a brief sojourn at the Buffalo exposition.